तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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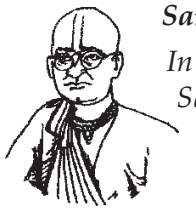
Harm to Oneself and Harm to Others

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada



In the following discussion, Srila Saraswati Thakur answers a question by referring to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's instruction to Srila Raghunath Das Goswami (Cc. antya *6.236):*

grāmya-kathā nā śunibe, grāmya-vārtā nā kahibe
bhāla nā khāibe, āra bhāla nā paribe

Don't listen to mundane talks and don't speak on mundane topics. Don't eat opulently and don't dress luxuriantly.

Question: Why are trivial talks and gossip, *grāmya-kathā*, unfavorable for devotion and harmful for us?

Srila Prabhupada: Sriman Mahaprabhu has said, "Do not hear *grāmya-kathā* and do not speak *grāmya-kathā*. Do not eat sumptuous food and do not wear fancy clothes." He said these words for those who are very attached to devotional service. If one eats sumptuous food one only harms oneself. This does not create any problem for others; it does not cause any disturbance in anyone else's devotional life. But it is much more harmful to wear fancy clothes. People wear fancy clothes only for the sake of others. How for the sake of others? The only purpose behind wearing fancy clothes is to distract others' eyes and mind from devotional service to the Supreme Lord. It is also not beneficial to indulge the tongue. Mahaprabhu also said, "If one runs here and there to satisfy his tongue, then such a tongue-indulgent person does not attain Krishna." (*Cc. antya* 6.227) If one hears *grāmya-kathā*, one hurts oneself more than by eating sumptuous food, and if one speaks *grāmya-kathā*, one hurts others more than by wearing fancy clothes. Srila Raghunath Das Goswami said that to hear or speak harmful things (things which are untrue, gossip, things which are distasteful or things which are very trivial) is the same as associating with a prostitute. Such talk distracts the mind and contaminates the consciousness, and thus creates a great obstacle to devotional service. You should know that those who are attached to such talk will automatically be uninterested in *hari-kathā*.

If five ordinary people get together, then invariably they will talk about trivial things. This is why devotees constantly talk about the Supreme Lord. Where there is *hari-kathā*, no one gets a chance to gossip or talk about trivial things.

— Excerpted from *Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur*. Mandala Publishing Group. Eugene, Oregon. 1997. Pages 94-95.

next column ☞

Pseudo-Religionist Rogues

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

There are many pseudo-worshipers who become religionists only for the sake of name and fame. Such pseudo-religionists do not wish to get out of this universe and reach the spiritual sky. They only want to maintain the status quo in the material world under the garb of worshiping the Lord.

The atheists and impersonalists, by preaching the cult of atheism, lead such foolish pseudo-religionists into the darkest regions. The atheist directly denies the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the impersonalists support the atheists by stressing the impersonal aspect of the Supreme Lord....

The pseudo-religionists have neither knowledge nor detachment from material affairs, for most of them want to live in the golden shackles of material bondage under the shadow of philanthropic activities disguised as religious principles. By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way, they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God. Such violators of religious principles have no respect for the authoritative *ācāryas*, the holy teachers in the strict disciplic succession. They ignore the Vedic injunction *ācāryopāsanā* — "One must worship the *ācārya*." — and Krishna's statement in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.2) *evaṁ paramparā-prāptam* — "This supreme science of God is received through the disciplic succession." Instead, to mislead the people in general, they themselves become so-called *ācāryas*. But they do not even follow the principles of the *ācāryas*.

These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government to prohibit such things, they escape punishment. They cannot, however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has clearly declared in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell.(*Bg*. 16.19-20) *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* confirms that these pseudo-religionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification. ❀

— *Śrī Īśopaniṣad*. English translation and commentary by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Los Angeles. 1984. Purport to text twelve.

The Glorious Association of the Devotees of Lord Hari

Adapted from Śrī Nārada Purāṇa 1.36.1-61

Previously, in the Raivata-manvantara, there was a learned and pious *brāhmaṇa* named Vedamali. Aside from being very religious, Vedamali was also quite wealthy. Before leaving this world, he gave half his wealth in charity and divided the remainder between his two sons, Yajnamali and Sumali.

Sumali always indulged in all kinds of vices. He was absorbed in singing and playing on musical instruments. Addicted to liquor, enamored by prostitutes, and always interested in other men's wives, Sumali squandered away all of the wealth. After all the gold given by his father had been wasted, Sumali continued his association with prostitutes by stealing other men's wealth.

Seeing Sumali's evil conduct, the intelligent Yajnamali became greatly distressed and tried to convince his younger brother to give up his sinful ways. After trying to convince him many times, one day Sumali became infuriated, took a sword in his hand, caught hold of his elder brother by his tuft of hair on his head and decided to kill him. When the residents of that town heard about this, a terrific uproar took place and the angry citizens stopped Sumali from harming his brother and bound that sinner up with ropes.

However, seeing Sumali's distress, the gentle Yajnamali, in whose heart the depth of feelings could not be measured, became distressed. Deluded by fraternal affection, he convinced the citizens to release his brother.

Yajnamali divided his remaining wealth into two parts. He kept half and gave the other half to his younger brother. However, the sinful and bewildered Sumali also squandered that wealth away by enjoying it along with fools, atheists, and *cāṇḍālas*.

asatām upabhogāya durjanānāṁ bibhūtayaḥ
picumaṇḍaḥ phalāḍhyo 'pi kākair evopabhujyate

The riches of wicked men are for the enjoyment of men of evil ways. The neem tree laden with plenty of fruits is enjoyed only by crows. — 13

Wasting away the wealth given to him by his elder brother, Sumali became intoxicated by drinking liquor. He unhesitatingly ate the flesh of cows and other forbidden foodstuffs. His kinsmen excommunicated him along with his *cāṇḍāla* women. Later, he was arrested and punished by the king.

On his part, the intelligent Yajnamali was always absorbed in pious activities. Due to his association with saintly persons, all of his sins were destroyed. All of the great soul Yajnamali's wealth was distributed among pious men. Yajnamali was a follower of the righteous path and he always gave charitable gifts to the deserving.

aho sad upabhogāya saj janānāṁ bibhūtayaḥ
kalpa-vṛkṣa-phalaṁ sarvam amarair eva bhujyate

The riches of good men are for the enjoyment of the good. All the fruits of the wish-yielding tree are enjoyed only by the immortal *devas*. — 19

After distributing his wealth in pious and charitable acts, Yajnamali engaged himself in the continuous service of Lord Vishnu. Yajnamali and Sumali eventually attained old age, and then they died simultaneously. Lord Hari sent a Vaikuntha airplane filled with his associates to the noble Yajnamali, who was always engaged in worshiping the Lord. Yajnamali ascended the divine chariot. He was worshiped by groups of *devas* and eulogized by leading sages. Gandharvas sang about him. Groups of *apsarās* served him. He was offered nourishment by the divine wish-fulfilling Kamadhenu cow. He shone like the storehouse of brilliance.

As he was going to the divine region of Vishnu, on the way he saw his younger brother. Sumali was being beaten by the soldiers of Yamaraja. He was afflicted with hunger and thirst. He had become a ghost. He was naked, miserable, and bound by ropes. He ran about here and there, weeping and lamenting helplessly. Seeing him, Yajnamali became distressed. Overwhelmed by sympathy, with his palms joined in reverence, Yajnamali asked the emissaries of Lord Vishnu, "Who is this person harassed by the soldiers of Yamaraja?"

Those servants of Lord Hari told him, "This is the sinful soul of Sumali, your former brother."

Hearing this, the merciful Yajnamali told the servants of Lord Vishnu, "Since we have traveled in this Vaikuntha airplane for some distance together, you are all my kinsmen.

"Those who understand the principles of social interaction (*dharma)* say that friendship takes place in seven words spoken or seven steps walked together. Friendship with a good man may be established simply by exchanging seven words with them or walking seven steps together. Friendship with a very good man may be established in merely three words or steps. But saintly persons establish friendships at every step." [*For the original text to this verse see "Seven Steps to Friendship" in* Bindu #*69*.] As such, please be kind and tell me a remedy by which Sumali may become free from the results of his sinful deeds.

Hearing the words of Yajnamali, the messengers of Lord Vishnu smiled and said, "O blessed Yajnamali, absorbed in devotion to Lord Narayan, we shall describe to you how Sumali may achieve liberation. We shall recount to you a great deed that had been performed by you in one of your previous births. Listen to it with great attention.

"Previously, you were born in a merchant family and you were known by the name Vishvambhar. Countless and great sins were committed by you. Devoid of even a trace of pious works, you even opposed your parents. Once, after having been rejected by your kinsmen, you were afflicted by grief and distress. You were oppressed by the fire of hunger. In that condition, you reached a temple of Lord Hari. Earlier, there had been a heavy rain and the area was very muddy. Desiring a place to stay the night, you cleaned some of the mud from that temple.

"By this, you unknowingly received the benefit of serving Lord Vishnu. As you slept in the temple that night, a very poisonous snake came and bit you, and you died. Due to the piety you had acquired from cleaning that temple, you attained a birth as a pious *brāhmaṇa* endowed with steady devotion to Lord Hari.

You desire to uplift your younger brother, who was a great sinner. We shall tell you the means by which that can be done. You need only donate to your brother the piety attained by cleaning as much area of the temple as

can be encompassed by straps of leather from a cow's hide. O blessed one, you may thus show kindness and uplift your brother."

Thus urged by the emissaries of Lord Vishnu, the highly intelligent Yajnamali gave that much piety to his brother. Through the merit bestowed by his brother, Sumali became freed from his sins. The servants of Yamaraja left him and ran away. An aerial chariot that contained all means of enjoyment of pleasures immediately came there. Sumali stepped into that vehicle and rejoiced.

Groups of *devas* offered obeisances to those brothers. Embracing each other, they felt great pleasure. Eulogized by great sages and sung about by Gandharvas, Yajnamali and Sumali went to Vishnu's world. There they joyously lived with Lord Hari for the period of a *kalpa*.

After enjoying many pleasures there, Yajnamali, of great intellect, became richly endowed with perfect knowledge and attained the supreme eternal abode *(paraṁ mokṣam).*

The highly blessed Sumali rejoiced in Vishnuloka. Afterwards, he came to the Earth again and was born as a *brāhmaṇa*. He was born in a very pure family and had all good qualities. He was a master of the Vedas. He was endowed with all riches and he was devoted to Lord Hari. Repeating the names of Lord Hari, he reached the banks of the Ganga. He took his bath there, and after seeing lord Vishveswara he attained the highest abode, which is difficult even for great yogis to attain.

tasmāt sarva-prayatnena saṁpūjyo jagatāṁ patiḥ
akāmād api ye viṣṇoḥ sakṛt pūjāṁ prakurvate
na teṣāṁ bhava-bandhas tu kadācid api jāyate

Thus, the Lord of the worlds should be worshipped to the best of one's ability. Indeed, entanglement in worldly existence never takes place for those who even unintentionally once worship Lord Vishnu.

hari-bhakti-ratān yas tu hari-buddhyā samarcayet
tasya tuṣyanti viprendra brahma-viṣṇu-mahesvarāḥ

O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara are pleased with one who worships those fond of devotional service to Hari, thinking them to be Hari himself.

hari-bhakti-parāṇāṁ tu saṅgināṁ saṅga-mātrataḥ
mucyate sarva-pāpebhyo mahāpātakavān api

Even a great sinner can be freed from all sins simply by contact with those dedicated to Lord Hari's devotees. (58-62) ❀ [*Some translations by Sri Matsya Avatar Das*.]

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Six Ways to Understand a Book

Srila Jiva Goswami's
Paramātma Sandarbha 105.6

upakramopasaṁhārāv abhyāso 'pūrvatā phalam
arthavādopapattī ca liṅgaṁ tātparya-nirṇayaḥ

[The six ways to understand the meaning of a book are:] 1) *upakrama*, the author's preamble; 2) *upasaṁhārau*, the author's concluding words; 3) *abhyāsa*, what is repeated by the author again and again in the course of the book; 4) *apūrvatā-phalam*, or what is unique to the book and not found in other books; 5) *artha-vāda*, the author's own declaration of his intent in writing the book, and; 6) *upapattī*, the application of logic to understand the author's intention. ❀

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